

FEBRUARY 1960

The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

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The Reformed Journal

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LETTER TO THE JOURNAL

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Is *Dennis* the Menace?

(Or The New Phrenology)

by Lester DeKoster

SINCE last September, thousands upon thousands of children, adolescents, and grown-ups have taken personality tests, aptitude tests, achievement tests, elementary ignorance examinations, and advanced confusion prognoses.

If little Dennis fares normally, he will become the most betested lad in history. His "profile" (which is a composite graph of test scores in several areas) will be more common than Barrymore's ever was, and easier to recognize than that of the Great Stone Face.

Is Dennis really a menace? Give him a battery of tests to find out. Hands off, until you do. No battering (with the rod, that is) without a battery (of tests, that is) vindicates your right to spank. Spare the test, and spoil the tot!

Should Dennis go to school at age four and nine-twelfths? Administer a "readiness" test!

Should he play with blocks, frogs, girls, crayons, or hand grenades? Give him an "aptitude" test!

Could he really profit from lessons in ballet, or a little guidance in manners? Determine his "social consciousness" score!

In short, is there anything under the sun—or beyond it—that Dennis' fond and famous bespectacled papa might want to know about Dennis? Let him rest in peace, for the first time since Dennis took to navigation on his own! If there is at present no test for tracking relentlessly down whatever last mysteries do still reside in little boys, or bigger boys, or full-grown boys—or, for that matter, in their fathers and mothers—be not dismayed, the laboratories will devise such an "instrument" in a jiffy. Then they will administer the "prototype" to enough young boys, middle-aged boys, or old boys to establish "norms," and, PRESTO! What was that you wanted to know about Dennis? Or was it about yourself? Do you want to enter high school, college, or graduate school? Do you want to move up to the front office? Are you best fitted for mental, physical, or no labor? Get hep, man! Take a TEST!

Some of us who are now achieving the slightly extended waistline which on the "profile" points to the mid-forties, remember what was a kind of joke in the days when draft-boards were mailing little notices beginning with "Greetings . . ." or some such terrifying word. The "joke" was this: when you arrived at a classification center, you filled out scores of questionnaires. They all in-

cluded space into which you carefully inscribed your previous occupation. Say that you were a baker by trade, while the man next to you had done office work. You both thoughtfully apprized the Army of these facts. Then, everybody took the aptitude tests. On the basis of the tests you were assigned your Army jobs. And so the baker went . . . to work in the office; and the clerk went . . . into the bakery! Of course! This was the "joke."

But it is a joke no longer. Men are hired, promoted or passed by, and sometimes fired on the basis of tests and interviews by testers. College entrance is more and more geared to achievement, or its absence, on Entrance Boards (hasn't that an impressive sound? You know you're up against the Real Thing as soon as you hear the name: *College Entrance Boards*). Do you get a momentary vision of, say, the Supreme Court, all stern and robed?).

A catalog of the publisher of these magic devices reads like a quick inventory of intellectual and personality traits—and he offers "tests" for them all. How does Jones score on the "Monday-morning Grouch" section?

The Future Is Bright

The prospect afforded by all this "scientific" peering and peeking into our inner mechanisms is intriguing.

Consider the case of the political candidate, 1970 style: "And, my friends," he bellows, "I challenge my honorable opponent to reveal *his* score on the National Public Service Prognosis Boards, as I have done!" This will be a welcome change from dark hints about financial misdealings or influence peddling.

Learned men will have additional symbols to print after their names. Next to the appropriate identification, they can add the test scores they have achieved: CEB 127, RSVP 197, PHEW 73....

You may even want to be elected to your school board, for it will have by-passed its most thorny problem: hiring new teachers. An office clerk can sketch on the blackboard the test "profile" of each candidate, and there "it" is: objective evidence enough to silence the mouth of friend or foe. Indeed, why bother after this to vote at all? Or, for that matter, why bother to meet at all? Let the clerk follow the clear pronouncement of the contrasting profiles, and send out the contracts. If

there appears to be a tie, send the two candidates to a testing center for further refinements, until at some level or other of the conscious, the subconscious, or the unconscious a demonstrable superiority emerges.

As for the matter of salaries, it is surely no problem to equate salary levels with test scores. Let a candidate earn his place on the salary scale by taking a battery of Monetary Remuneration Boards.

And what a boon lies on the horizon for the happy teacher whose "profile" got her the job! Why toil over report cards? Give all the little folk the Retrospective - Prospective Accomplishment - Aptitude Examination, and let the semester's work be evaluated swiftly, neatly, scientifically. Takes time to correct the tests? Catch up, man! It's all done by machine now — while Miss Jones goes shopping.

You might even want to assume the burdens of being a school principal — if you could score the necessary levels on tests designed to probe your aptitude for the job. The principal's load is lighter now. Confront irate parents with Dennis' blooper on the last Disorderly Conduct Examination: what have you got to say to THAT, eh? Tell them he can be re-admitted when the Tester-in-Chief says so; and let them go and swap unintelligible jargon with him for a while.

What is more, principal's recommendations need no longer accompany Dennis across the gap between high school and college — IF the test scores say he may try to cross that gap! What, after all, does a mere human being's recommendation rate beside the verdict of Entrance Boards? Know your place, my friend! Why not play golf this afternoon, and leave recommendations to the test-makers? They have never met Dennis, but they know within mathematical fractions what a hundred million boys like Dennis should know, and be, and do, and become. Did you really think that little old *You* knew better than IBM! Pshaw!

And give the office girl the day off, too. She need not bother to send transcripts on to the college Dennis hopes to menace. What do transcripts matter when Dennis will spend his "orientation" week wading through a battery of tests against whose verdicts his high-school grades will whisper in vain!

In fact, just to change the field: do you think Pastor Vander Smile really fits the style of this congregation? Hadn't he better spend a week or two at the Pastorological Testing Institute?

And There Is Hope

There are two rays of cheer, if you are looking for any, which could break through the cloud of profiles and graphs. Or are you immune to the implication of this spreading mania?

Remember reading about Gall and Spurzheim? They discovered the "science" of Phrenology. It was the method of discerning one's social and intellectual characteristics by some examination of the bumps — or absence of them — on one's head. They piled up impressive "evidence," and made a lot of converts a century and a half ago. But we pretty much dismiss that "science" with a good laugh now.

Perhaps a little chuckling will clear the air for Dennis, too, of some of the appalling and deadly earnestness with which all this testing is carried on. Have you ever taken, or administered, one? Remember how the air drips tension? Time stands breathlessly by until the proctor says "Go!" The crash of a pencil falling on the floor sends chilly prickles up your spine. The "now-or-never" of it numbs your mind and hand. And your instinctive fear is sound enough, really.

For what you fear is the fact that here, at the point where your special pencil blackens the narrow space, man meets machine. Matter, infused with human ingenuity, is your real enemy. No other man, no humanity, no pity, no kindness, no understanding will judge your work. The old struggle between man and nature has right here and now taken on a new and formidable dimension: matter has been joined by mind, and stands ready to destroy all your hopes, your ambitions, your very future itself! For test will be graded by machine. However ingenious, it will always be still the machine, unfeeling, uncaring, unconcerned — against you, the man, in a world ever more dominated by force and matter, aided now by human genius. If you never sensed Frankenstein before, you quail before him as the proctor's remorseless seconds tick by.

Maybe it is only laughter that will drive him away, and dispel some of the massive seriousness of it all. The elections of 1948 gave a set-back, though alas not a set-down, to polls and pollsters; and we can all take forecasts with that grain of salt essential to sanity and to independence. Perhaps this attitude will carry over into prognostic testing some day soon, if, say, the boy most destined to fail — by the test scores — becomes the best President the nation has had for a generation. This might be one "failure" the testers cannot cover up by ignoring it.

And, moreover, there is hope in the innate American spirit of open competition! Already College Entrance Boards has a competitor of sorts in this business of saying or refusing to say "Sesame" to the ivy-covered portals. What happens, do you suppose, when some really enterprising service advertises: "College Entrance Made Easy! Promotion Assured! We Guarantee to Prove that YOU ARE A GENIUS!" (All for only \$27.50, on easy payments).

A Dutch Teacher Views American Education (II)

by Roel Bijkerk

Grand Rapids, February 1960

DEAR JAN,

In my letter of last month I gave you some of my impressions of American education, and I promised you that this month I would write about the principles and philosophy of this great country's way of educating its children. Please remember, however, that I have not been here long enough to get acquainted with all the highlights of "the educational situation" and my opinions are based upon restricted experience, some conversations with teachers, and some articles in newspapers and magazines. That is not a sufficiently sound basis for extensive analysis and evaluation, but you only asked for some impressions and tentative opinions and so I dare go on with this letter.

First, then, about the way high schools and colleges operate here. The system of *one* school for many different forms of educational training has some very attractive features. The student does not have to make an early choice with lasting consequences. He is not pushed into a world of "classes" of schools, with all the adherent competition and "class-consciousness." He meets and plays with children from all kinds of families, children of differing abilities and with differing interests. This system of one school for all education reflects the idea that men are created equal.

Another method in the American school, the credit system, also appeals to me, in principle. Failing in a particular subject means the loss of a year of study, but only in that subject. In Holland it might easily mean the loss of a year's study in *all* the subjects the student was taking. This is rather hard on the student, especially if he did fairly well in most of the subjects!

Furthermore, the American school is a very *flexible* organization. The student does not have to conform completely to a rigid, prescribed academic program; he can choose those courses that fit his needs, or at least his wishes. It is not at all difficult for the school to introduce new courses or to drop obsolete ones.

But although there are many attractive characteristics, I feel that their very attractiveness implies some weak points too. For instance, it seems to me that the idea that all men are created equal tends to be taken to mean that "all men are the

same" and that consequently they should be given the same facilities of education. "Democracy" is thus interpreted to mean that there are no "special" people (words like "aristocracy," "élite," and the like are definitely suspect and considered undemocratic) and so there should be no opportunities for them either. The schools therefore are assumed to fit *all* children.

Now that seems a little unrealistic and inefficient to a Dutchman, doesn't it? It does not seem possible any more today, seeing the results of intensive research on this point, to maintain that there is no such thing as "native ability" in intellectuals. And it seems quite undemocratic to me to deny children the opportunity to develop their abilities in a way quantitatively and qualitatively different from that afforded the child of mediocre capacity. It appears to me that the gifted child tends to be educationally neglected to some extent in this country, especially in his teens.

I do think that in the Netherlands we have probably gone much too far in creating different schools for different students. But it seems that America has gone in the opposite direction to an equal extreme. I still cannot see the value of forcing a child of evidently "un-intellectual" ability and interest to sit in the same classroom with a child of clearly superior intellectual capacity and ambition, and to follow the same courses in grammar, history, geography, and science. It seems to me that neither one of these children is thus given a fitting education! And the teacher has to talk either over the head of the one or past the justifiably bored mind of the other. No, all in all I still see a point in having a few different forms of schools (possibly in the same building, if so desired) for students of different personality structure, starting at, let's say, the age of fourteen. At present the American student simply has to adjust to the school. It seems to me he has a right to expect the school to be adjusted to him too.

The American system of credit accumulation is good in many respects, but it also can — and does in some cases — result in an education having many gaps. For instance, it is possible that a person completes a college (or even a university) education without ever having studied a foreign language. Now I think that is really going a little far! Our Dutch system of progressing from grade to

grade may stress too much the importance of many-sided, really "liberal," education, but the credit system seems to work out to be extreme, too, in the other direction.

The elasticity of organization I mentioned before as an attractive feature of American schools. But here again I think there is a weakness: flexibility can so easily turn into disintegration!

But let me now turn to consider another characteristic of American education, at the level of principles and basic philosophy.

"Learning for learning's sake" is regarded by many here to be an obsolete theme. As one person said to me: "I do not give a penny for academic learning as such; and especially not for purely academic education. Learning, and the teaching of learning, should always be directly related to life, to adjustment to the world, to finding your way about in a productive manner." "Successful adjustment to the world of reality" has become the one great slogan for education, including educational policies. If, say, the majority of the people never really need to read or to speak a foreign language, then the study of languages should not be a required part of the regular curriculum. The same holds true for mathematics, physics, and so on. This premise and these conclusions are advocated by representatives of many different groups, including Christian denominations.

But is not this premise a great fallacy in the eyes of a European? Do you remember, Jan, how we used to discuss this issue of learning and reality? Our conclusion was that the realm of learning-as-such is as *real* and as *vitally* important a world for the human being as are the worlds of physical and social reality. We felt that a person is "incomplete" if he has not come at least to respect, and preferably to know a little about, the domain of general-knowledge-by-itself, quite apart from any immediate applicability in a concrete sense. To many Americans, however, the European's regard for "theory and imagination" appears to be an *escape* from reality, instead of a "real" enrichment of it! It is rather startling to hear a man say, with deep conviction: "I see no point in a housewife being able to read a little French. All the information she needs, to become a happy and good citizen, is available in English. Her study of French in high school and college was a complete waste of time and effort."

Thus it is understandable that more and more non-academic courses (such as home economics, driving instruction, and the like) are added to the curriculum. And all that at the expense of what we used to celebrate as "solid academic disciplining of the mind."

And now I have already touched upon an issue I want to go into a little more: the *function* of the school in education. As you by now undoubtedly gather, the school in America is not primarily a place for learning. "And that is as it should be," say many—if not most—American parents and educators. As far as I can make out, rather simplistically perhaps, the logic goes as follows:

- A. Education must be directed at the whole child.
- B. The school is involved in education.
- C. Therefore the school should aim at educating the whole child.
- D. Consequently the school must take a hand in directing *all* the child's developmental activities.
- E. The end product of a school's activities should be a well-adjusted personality.

This reasoning, I think, lies behind the many extra-curricular functions of the schools. It is a kind of implicit and/or explicit philosophy of education which sounds inconclusive to a Dutchman. Why? A. and B. are rather self-evident. Who is going to question these propositions? Not a Dutchman, surely! If something is wrong with the argument, it must lie in the last three points.

What do you think, Jan? Should the school attempt to educate the whole child? That would be quite an order, for one thing! But more importantly: would it not be an "imperialistic" expansion of the duties and prerogatives of the school? What about the church? And more especially: what about the parents? Is it not the right and the duty of the parents *only* to attempt to educate their children toward "wholeness"? Are not the church and the school to give the parents a helping hand in the difficult and many-sided problems of education, a *specialized* helping hand, to provide information which the parent cannot give his child because of lack of time and specialized knowledge?

Of course, this specialized help should be given in the *spirit* of the parents' convictions (that is why there should be denominational schools). Naturally, the additional information should not be a "compartment" of education, unrelated to the other compartments. It should be related to the "whole." But should the *emphasis* in the school's efforts be on the *whole* of education, or on additional information? If the emphasis is on the "whole"—yes, then the school must direct as many aspects of the child's development as possible. But what then is left of the parents' responsibility? Is it the duty of the parents, or is it the task of the school to aim educational efforts at the child's total personality development?

It is rather evident, I think, that the parents in America do indeed take the school to be an insti-

tution to provide over-all development of the personality of their children. For instance, there are all kinds of parents' "booster clubs" for extra-curricular activities (sports, for instance). And the school is expected to take on the organization of those activities, if the parents contribute the means. The parents expect the college of their denomination to lead the students in almost every walk of life. And the parents sometimes seem more concerned about these extra-curricular aspects of the American school's functions than about the scholastic standards of teaching in the school.

Given this philosophy of education, it is unavoidable that the school is less and less a place for learning. And I feel that this is a real loss in important respects. As a Dutchman I still make a definite distinction between the respective functions of the home, the church, the school, and clubs for spare-time activities. Consequently I still feel that the school is the place where my child should receive a sound intellectual education, one which is in accordance with my religious and moral principles; that the church should aid me in raising my child in the love and fear of God, while my wife and I should try to see to it that my child engages in the right kinds of social, recreational and artistic activities; that it is our responsibility to watch over our child's behavior and development in *all* the walks of life, ranging from his religious and moral and academic behavior to the ways he seeks amusements and hobbies as a high-school and as a college student. As my respected teacher Dr. J. Waterink always emphasized: education of the total personality is in the first and final place the task of the parents.

But, Jan, if there is one thing I have learned here, it is this: you simply cannot transplant a Dutch, or even European, basic philosophy to the

USA and expect to see people adhere to your ideas and therefore provide you with the same kind of socio-cultural organizations you were used to in the old country. Life, in all its aspects, is so really different here! Now I do not want to imply that this is reason enough not to question and criticize what I observe here — after all, I did write this letter!

But what would we hear, Jan, in the way of analytical and critical examination, if an American would give his opinions about our Dutch system of education? I shudder to think of it! But I am quite sure that we could profit from it!

Reading once again what I wrote in this letter, I notice it is evident that I do seriously question the value of several typical features of American education. But — as you know from my former letters — I enjoy my stay in this country so very much that I would like to settle down here permanently! Which points out that I definitely do not prefer the general Dutch way of being a nation to the American way of life!

To summarize, Jan: I think that the American and the Dutch systems of education present two extreme positions concerning some common, basic issues. If you start from one standpoint, the extremeness of some of the other's characteristics naturally looks very exaggerated indeed! Perhaps both parties can profit from looking in the mirror of an exchange of observations, which works often like a photographic negative: white and black both look rather odd and unreal; the truth lies in relating and converting them to each other in the correct proportions.

Well, my friend, I must leave it at this, I think. Hope to hear from you soon!

Regards,
ROEL BIJKERK

God and Man in Today's Drama

by John W. Hollenbach

IN an address to the Hope College faculty in September 1959 on "The Place of Humanities in Modern Education," Dr. Nathan A. Scott devoted much time to an analysis of modern literature. He maintained that the dominant or key experience which serious writers today are revealing is that of man lost, lonely, divorced from his fellow men, divorced from sense of God. The death of God, said he, is a cultural fact of our age.

It is interesting to explore this generalization in

the field of modern drama. An impressive number of plays of recent years present the central characters as lonely, desolate creatures, at the edge of despair, lost in a dark wood, unable to find even one other who can lead them out. Usually they are men with deep longings for the good life, the "noble" action as described by an earlier tradition of men of faith and reason, but they peck away futilely at the walls around them. Usually they are shown as persons emasculated partly by the

conviction that no moral power exists either in society or above society to sustain any noble effort. The daring good act, if it is possible occasionally to perform such, is bound to lead to even worse torture and suffering.

The later plays of O'Neill that have come on the theater boards in the last decade, the dramas of Sartre, of Beckett, and of Anouilh, most of the plays of Tennessee Williams, some of the plays of Miller such as *Death of a Salesman* and *A View from the Bridge*, Inge's *Come Back Little Sheba*, and Wishin-grad's *The Rope Dancers* center around characters who are cut off, isolated, unable to achieve enduring, sustaining relationships either with man or God. Usually they have lost all faith in their fellow men and most of all in themselves. At times they passionately love themselves and defend their actions blindly, but more frequently and more deeply they are filled with self-loathing. Witness this in the tortured Tyrone family of O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*; in the husband and wife in *The Rope Dancers*; in the fumbling and explosions of Willy and Biff in *Death of a Salesman*, or of Eddie in *A View from the Bridge*; and in all the characters that wander aimlessly and talk endlessly in Beckett's *Endgame* and *Waiting for Godot*.

These are the people that leading dramatists of the 1950's are concerned to show us. And there is value in our reading their plays in order to arrive at a broader and more sensitive understanding of the sickness that is a part of our age—and perhaps an understanding of ourselves who may be infected with it too.

BUT drama is rarely written simply to inform, to present a case history. It is among the most impassioned forms of writing. And when its subject is the human condition—as it almost invariably is—and especially the disease and ill in the human condition—as it frequently is—it is almost bound to contain some hints as to the author's analysis of the causes of this condition, and even of the possible directions to take for regaining health. It is at this point of basic cause and cure that our modern dramatists diverge most. It is at this point, too, that their dramas become most interesting and significant.

Many years ago Eugene O'Neill wrote the oft-quoted statement: "The playwright today must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it—the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with." Now this, grammatically and rhetorically, is a horrendous sentence. Not only is it unwieldy, not only does it end in a preposition, but it is basically ambiguous.

Is O'Neill saying that the sickness of today is "the death of the old God, and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one?" If so, then the sentence seems to say that the old God is not really dead, but man in his sickness has lost his faith in the reality of the God Jehovah who sustained men of earlier generations. Then, too, unhappy as the lot of man is, something can be done, either by God or by man through God; and the dramatist as a responsible agent or physician can help. Mysterious and tragic as the lot of the sick man is today, much as he suffers, there remains something to look forward to; and the dramatist, in digging at the roots, can comfort himself in the faith that his insights and diagnosis may somehow be helpful in restoring men to health.

But is this O'Neill's meaning? Or is O'Neill saying that the *root* or *cause* of the sickness of man is "the death of the old God"? If so, then the implication is that the old God—the one who created and sustains a moral, meaningful universe—is really dead (very likely never existed except in the minds of deluded men). If this is his meaning, then hopeless and despairing indeed is the lot of man. There is no remedy. In fact, the deluded hanger-on, believing in the dead old God, is perhaps better off than the man of better understanding. Knowledge is the most fearful and ironic of man's gifts. The dramatist cannot be comforted by a sense of mission. His dramatic outburst may at the best give him a perverse personal satisfaction that he has shouted his defiance against this black, dark, unjust ultimate power.

NOW I have drawn out these two interpretations primarily because they represent two different underlying philosophical and emotional positions from which the dramatists I have mentioned—including O'Neill himself—might have written about their lost characters. I would like, now, to comment briefly on their plays in relation to these two extreme positions, to see which comes closer to the position of their creators.

Let us begin with O'Neill. If I read his sequence of plays aright, O'Neill seems to be passionately longing to have men resurrect the old God, or even to find a satisfying new one (remember *Dynamo*), and at one point in his career, in the early '30's, may have come close to reaching the conclusion that the death of the old God was simply man's sickness. But it was a hopeless effort. O'Neill himself suffered from the same sickness as his leading characters, and his plays—extremely autobiographic—of the later period (especially *The Iceman Cometh*, and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, but also *A Touch of the Poet* and *Moon for the Misbegotten*) are powerful but hopeless and often turgid cries of one who is hurting. As Edwin Engel

has said in *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill*: "Whereas O'Neill thought he was digging at the roots of the sickness of today, much of the time he was really digging at his own roots." For O'Neill, the old God really is dead, and the great forces that hold puny men in their power are cruel and inhuman. O'Neill's plays, then, leave us with no hint of a medicine. Their mood is desperate and despairing rage.

Waiting for Godot and *Endgame*, by Samuel Beckett, are very akin to the plays of O'Neill in their mood and in the framework out of which they come. Certainly Godot (or God) ought to come and heal. The opposite of what the old God stood for is not to be admired or sought, even though this is the normal pattern of man's living. But Beckett leaves us with the message that Godot will not come, for Godot—the old God—is dead, and waiting for him, although as meaningful as any other activity, perhaps more meaningful, is still—to anyone of true insight—quite futile.

Sartre in *The Flies* and Anouilh in most of his plays seem to draw close to the same position as O'Neill and Beckett. Both view the forces that surround man and that have the power to hurt him and destroy his life as being unfriendly, at the least. Man has been played a dirty trick by being born with his limitations and destructive urges into this dark universe. And the note of defiant rage is to be found in their plays. This is especially interesting to sense beneath the urbanity and Gallic wit of Anouilh's plays.

But both of these dramatists are removed one step from the blackness of despair. If the old God is dead, and if the real supernatural forces are man's enemy and his superior ninety-nine percent of the time, there remains—mysterious as this is to understand—still the possibility for man to make a right decision or choice even though he recognizes he will be flayed or destroyed for it. Orestes, in *The Flies*, arrives at the terrible decision that he must either kill his mother and the king or else submit and see his people continue in a bondage that was destroying their souls, but that they in their blindness preferred. The sensitive reader can hardly help hearing Sartre applaud Orestes for the decision he reaches. Anouilh, more Freudian in his analysis of man and the tangled nature of his inner urges, mostly base and destructive but occasionally beautiful and self-forgetting, in a series of plays—*Romeo and Jeanette*, *Eurydice*, *The Rehearsal*, *The Ermine*—reveals the rarity of the high moments of love, and the way in which those choosing these moments are destroyed, not in spite of but almost because of their choice. Repeatedly he shows that those who love most are the most tortured. But if I read his plays right, his message, tinged with

bitterness at the cruelty of it all, is that the high moment is worth all.

Thus the plays of these two Frenchmen which I have mentioned contain a quarrel with the new Gods—the troublesome real ones so unlike the dead old God—but they go on to suggest the manner in which man, with his tiny corner of freedom, can find some measure of relief from his hurt in spite of the Gods. There is a sort of sad satisfaction to be gained in trying to reform these terrible Gods, and in momentarily rising above God, even at terrible cost. The Prometheus legend is still with us.

PERHAPS Mac Leish's *J.B.* should be mentioned at this point, for it, too, deals, even more directly, with the question of who is this God that brings such pain to man or at least permits such pain, and what is man's proper relationship to him. Is it better to fling the gauntlet in his face or to submit? Some have come away from this play feeling that Mac Leish's main thrust is an elegy that the old God is really not a just and merciful God, and that all that makes life bearable is that this real God "slipped" in his inhumanity and left man capable of loving his fellows unselfishly. So even though man will never find justice, he still has love to make life somewhat meaningful. This view is supported by the scene near the conclusion of the play in which Sarah, J.B.'s wife, returns to him. She has tried suicide but has been halted by love of life and love for her husband. Says she to J.B.:

*I loved you
I couldn't help you anymore.
You wanted justice and there was none—
Only love.*

In context it is evident that the love which exists, in Sarah's estimation, is certainly not in God but in humans. But this reading, I think, overlooks the alternative presented in the final lines of the play. It is J.B.'s final word, and it focuses upon the recognition of man as creature. The mind of man is helpless to comprehend God's justice, and even the teachings of the church cannot do it.

*The lights in churches are out
The lights have gone out in the sky.*

But, the lines conclude,

*Blow on the coal of the heart
And we'll see by and by.*

If these lines do suggest that Mac Leish's ultimate frame of reference is a desperate faith, a "stubborn theocentrism," still the dramatic tension and power of the play grows out of the despairing effort not only of J.B. and his wife but even more of the two old men who are playing the role of

God and Satan, to fathom the mystery of suffering and of God's role in it. I am tempted to conclude that Mac Leish in writing this play was teetering on the seesaw between the two positions—and that his play leaves one with the same ambiguity as O'Neill's statement.

TURNING now to Arthur Miller, I find in him a playwright who usually does not spend his energies bewailing the death of the old God or shaking his fist in futile anger at the new gods. His plays seem to rise in general out of the framework of belief in a moral universe with a responsible, just, final Agent, mysterious as his acts often are. His plays, too, are concerned with digging at the roots of man's sickness. They tell of the Willy Lohmans and the Joe Kellers and the Eddie Carbones who have followed the wrong gods. They, too, are filled with the weight of the impact of environment and heredity on man's behavior and of the terrible complexity of our modern industrial society that makes "right" action for the normal, stumbling, none-too-intelligent individual so difficult, and his frequent failure so pathetic and understandable. But his plays, in laying bare the roots of man's behavior, suggest that the audience, once they confront and understand these roots, can use this new wisdom to their profit either in discovering what are the right ends of living or in learning how to wrestle with the complex problems of choice in today's complex society.

Miller's plays are plays not light and happy;

they center on men who make the wrong choices. The tragic note is present as Miller reveals penetratingly the strong inner drives and external pressures that led Willy and Joe and Eddie to adopt inverted hierarchies of loyalties, and the painful consequences to themselves and to those around them. But the plays are not as bleak as those of O'Neill and Anouilh. They show men who make wrong choices and men who make right ones. They show man more definitely as a responsible moral agent, whose decisions do make a difference both for himself and for others. This is true even in the play that carries the deepest sense of fatality—*A View from the Bridge*—and is even more prominent in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. Miller himself, in an eloquent essay *On Social Plays*, has called for the return to the Greek view of drama. Says he, "For the Greeks a play was a dramatic consideration of the way man ought to live." Even the tragedies contained a tragic victory, for the plays showed that "the polis—the whole people—had discovered some aspect of the Grand Design which also was the right way to live together."

Miller's own plays tend to have this dimension, a dimension that is only possible when the dramatist is able to forego preoccupation with crying out how and where he is hurting, and to direct at least a part of his attention to the problem of healing. Is Miller an anachronism in the theatrical world, or the preserver of an old tradition, or the harbinger of a new era in the serious drama?

Infant Baptism and the Early Church

by Harry Hutchison

IN THIS short article it will be impossible to raise (far less to answer) every single question that bears on the subject of Infant Baptism. (I have made a very modest attempt to do this in my book *Why Baptize Infants?*) Our aim will be simply to see infant baptism in the light of the early church, and to draw what conclusions we believe to be justified. It is, of course, often asserted that there is no evidence of infant baptism in early writings until the late second century—and this is an assertion we shall be concerned to refute very vigorously.

We do not need to conceal the fact that evidence concerning the practice of infant baptism during the first century or two is scanty. There are some very natural reasons why this is so. To begin with,

there is the fact that most of the early writings, that is, the non-Biblical manuscripts, have been lost; which is hardly surprising when we recall the social conditions of the time. More important, there is the distinctively Hebrew reluctance to set down in writing a detailed account of the ordinances of worship used within the church, a reluctance which the early Christian community shared. It refused to publicize the church's sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Critics of infant baptism may reply that this is very "convenient" from the viewpoint of its supporters! But the fact is that, whatever we may think of the motives of the early Christians, they certainly acted as they did from reasons of piety. They shrank from exposing holy things to people who might defile

them. This, for instance, was the attitude of Justin Martyr; and it brings us at least a partial explanation of the scarcity of information about infant baptism during the first two centuries.

But an even more important reason for this scarcity is that such a widely accepted practice as infant baptism did not *need* to be commented on. There was little point in taking up valuable writing space with a subject familiar to everyone. As is amply confirmed in the New Testament (e.g., by Paul in the third chapter of Galatians), Christian baptism was the natural "fulfilment" of the rite of admission to the church prescribed to Abraham (i.e., circumcision), and the coming of a new dispensation made no difference to the provision whereby infants could and should become members of the church through a pre-ordained rite. As we shall note in a moment, this fact is the reason why the baptizing of infants is not specifically mentioned in the "Great Commission" at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel.

IN AN even more positive vein, however, let us consider quickly some evidence which strongly supports this conclusion that infant baptism was *not* introduced into the life of the early church as a "novelty." About the middle of the second century, the famous Justin Martyr wrote about those who "from infants had been disciplined to Christ," i.e., people who had been born during the latter part of the *first* century. It is both interesting and significant that Justin uses the same word which we find in St. Matthew, chapter 28, to express the notion of "making disciples" (*matheteuo*); for these were actually people who had undergone Christian baptism in infancy and who had grown up to make the content of the Promise their own. Origin, an equally great theologian of the early church, is firmly convinced of the antiquity of infant baptism. "The Church has received the tradition from the Apostles that Baptism ought to be administered to infants."

In calling attention to such evidence, however, let us make it clear that we do not rest our doctrine of infant baptism on it. We have many good theological reasons for the practice; but in terms of this article's title we are concerned largely to show how unstable and unwarranted is the widely accepted Baptist claim that there was no infant baptism in the early church. During the last few decades, indeed, a great deal of interesting evidence has been accumulating. The scholar Oepke showed, in 1928, the falsity of the view that infant baptism did not arise until the second century; and the work of Jeremias did much to bring us *historical* confirmation of a practice which, on theological

grounds, we were perfectly able to justify. The work of these men has still not been refuted by those of "Baptist" persuasion, though they attempt to do so by breaking down the unity of the Old and New Testaments.

Most recently of all, of course, the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls has amply confirmed that infant baptism was a widespread and honored practice in the Old Testament church; and this evidence we believe to be as valuable as it would be within the Bible itself because it tacitly confirms what we maintain is taken as a matter of course by the Bible. In an issue of the *Scottish Journal of Theology* (March, 1955: Vol. 8, No. 1) it is rightly pointed out that "the Evangelists speak of baptism not as a strange rite invented by John, but as something so familiar that it requires neither detailed description nor careful explanation." This important fact must govern our interpretation of Christ's commission to His disciples (Matthew 28:19f). We need not hesitate to admit that the first necessity was to make *adult* disciples of all nations, and for them to be baptized as *believers*. This is only natural; for, without baptized believers, how could we expect any children to be baptized? It is, indeed, because Christianity was only in its infancy that the baptism of adult converts figures so prominently in the New Testament. This was an inevitable part of total Christian strategy. But a most significant fact is that, in this expanding, missionary-minded church, there was never in the first thousand years of its existence any teaching or practice which specifically excluded the children of believers from the Sacrament of Baptism. In an early document called *The Preachings of Peter* it is related that those who have been baptized are forbidden to eat at a common table with the unbaptized — a rule which applied to parents and children as well as to adult and adult. There is only one conclusion from this (unless our sense of humor leads us to accept the possibility of parents and their children eating and sleeping in different homes!): namely, that the children were baptized. This we believe to be one of the most important single pieces of evidence outside the New Testament.

IN AN article on infant baptism and the early church it is inevitable that reference should be made, as far as evidence *within* the New Testament is concerned, to the several cases of "mass baptisms" that are recorded there. In doing so, a dual error is possible: we may either underestimate the importance of this evidence (as is done by Baptist theologians), or we may exaggerate its importance (as is done by many protagonists of infant baptism). This much we must certainly

say: that a doctrine of infant baptism cannot be grounded solely on these instances of "mass baptism." However, these instances do throw light on how the disciples interpreted Christ's words, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The very least we can say (and we can say more) about the baptism of households is that there were certainly some occasions on which baptism was administered to those who did not have faith (in the deepest Christian sense) and had not "repented." The baptizing of Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14f.) may not justify our thinking that the household contained one or more infants, but it certainly justifies our assuming that *someone* was baptized without fully conscious faith being required. The same conclusion is suggested by the story of the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:29f.).

Now this point about the mass baptism of households is a rather more significant consideration than might appear, even to one sympathetic to the practice of infant baptism; for what is recorded in the New Testament is not merely the baptism of a few families at random. In fact, on nearly every occasion on which parents are baptized the baptism of the whole household takes place. In his little book, *What Is Christian Civilization*, Dr. John Baillie has written: "Even in the earliest days the standard of Christian commitment had of course not been uniform. At a very early date the Church was already in the habit of baptizing whole households, including the children and the slaves at a single ceremony." Why? Surely because, in God's eyes, parents and children are in some very real sense one. In a well-known sentence from his First Corinthian Letter St. Paul is simply summing up the fact and the consequences of this "spiritual solidarity": "Your children" (he says to Christian parents) "are holy" (I Cor. 7:14). In other words, these children are set apart as belonging already to the Covenant of Grace. Such a text as this does not justify us in grounding a doctrine of infant baptism on it, but it is certainly to be regarded as an expression of a theological position which was universally accepted in the days of Biblical Christianity. It confirms again what Christ Himself took for granted when He commissioned His disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The idea of "spiritual solidarity" is at the very heart of Biblical thinking; and yet, very early in Christianity's history, this notion clashed with the exaggerated individualism of post-Socratic Hellenism. And today popular thought is not instinctively drawn to the Biblical mode of thinking (this "climate," of course, is all to the advantage of the Baptist

claims). Nevertheless, nothing is more important — important for the *truth* of the matter — than that we should sit again at the feet of the Reformers who strove manfully to preserve this vital idea of the spiritual solidarity of the believing parent and his child.

FINALLY, let us in the light of early church practice consider one of the commonest objections to infant baptism — the claim that if we baptize infants we are bound to create two "classes" within the church, the regenerate and the unregenerate. It will be noted, incidentally, that this objection sidesteps the *truth* or otherwise of infant baptism, and shifts all the interest on to the practical "effects" of the practice within the church. This objection, in our view, forgets an important fact, the fact that even a baptized believer may not be "regenerate." But it forgets the even more important fact that the visible church has *never* been composed of only converted and regenerate people. The early church itself is an admirable instance of this fact. The list of early Christians who, though members of the church, clearly showed themselves to be "unregenerate," in the sense normally understood, is a fairly large one; and this situation simply reflects how the membership of the church is made up in every age.

It is no coincidence that critics of infant baptism usually fail to appreciate one of the most important of Biblical truths: that the church can only be gathered together, in the ultimate sense, as an *organism*. Significantly enough, the words "converted" and "regenerate" are rarely used in the New Testament with reference to *individuals*; and certainly regeneration is never commended as a *sine qua non* of church membership. In the visible church the "called" and the "elect" are found together. The very idea of creating a society of "proved" Christians who would then undergo Believers' Baptisms is certainly not to be found in the early church. It is worth noting that, in both Old and New Testaments, church members are described not as "regenerate" but as "disciples," i.e., learners. In the thought of the Bible, one of the main differences between baptized infants and baptized adults is the difference in "distance traveled." (This conclusion will not commend itself to those whose theology is of a "perfectionist" variety!) In fact, baptism does not refer only to what is past in a man's experience. The forward-looking aspect of baptism — in terms of subjective experience, at least — is of equal importance with the backward-looking, as is clearly suggested by the fact that on many occasions in

the New Testament people are baptized after the very briefest acquaintance with the Christian faith — sometimes a matter of a few hours. We must, of course, never deny the possibility of a person with no previous knowledge of Christ being in a real sense "regenerated" after a brief contact with the gospel; but this is the exception rather than the rule in the New Testament. The purpose of baptism is, *inter alia*, not simply to "clinch" an already existing faith, but to help induce this faith. Exactly how is a question which the scope of this article does not allow us to answer, but we do grave injustice to the New Testament record if we deny this forward-looking aspect of baptism. Ideally considered, indeed, the true efficacy of baptism ought to be progressively realized right until death.

PERHAPS we should not close this article on infant baptism and the early church without pointing out what is surely one of the most ironical facts in the New Testament — ironical, that is, in

the light of the Baptist claim to reject infant baptism on Biblical grounds. Let Oscar Cullmann make the point for us. He writes in *Baptism in the New Testament*: "I should like with all force to emphasize at the outset that there are in the New Testament decidedly fewer traces, indeed none at all, of the baptism of adults born of parents *already* Christian, and brought up by them Those who dispute the biblical character of Infant Baptism have, therefore, to reckon with the fact that adult baptism for sons and daughters born of Christian parents is *even worse attested* by the New Testament than Infant Baptism . . . and indeed lacks any kind of proof." This is a fact which, to say the least, should be seriously pondered by those who criticize infant baptism — a fact which, added to the others noted in the previous pages, might even prompt some of us who hold to the practice to abandon any lingering "apologetic" attitude and to realize afresh that, from the historical as well as the theological and psychological angle, we share a belief of which we may be proud.

Karl Barth's Rejection of Infant Baptism

by Leonard Verduin

IT is common knowledge that Karl Barth has broken with infant baptism. It is perhaps also common knowledge that Barth's argument in the matter has been met with little favor, yes, with definite opposition, from our Reformed colleagues in the Netherlands.

At the outset it must be noted that Barth's rejection of infant baptism stems in a large way from his experience with Nazism. He had seen the Church in Germany become the willing tool of the Party; he had witnessed the rise of the *Deutsche Christen* movement which spearheaded the integration of the Church into the Nazi program. And Barth was led to ask how the Church in Germany came to be hitched so willingly to the cart of National Socialism. He discovered that the close integration of Church and Party had been facilitated by the fact that in Germany the Church had been, since Reformation times, a *Volkskirche*, that is, a Church so delineated that it becomes coextensive with the *Volk* or "people." The Church, Barth had discovered, followed so easily into the devious ways of the Nazi state because it had for

centuries lain intertwined with the German State. Barth had come to see that if this had been otherwise Hitler would not have been able to hitch the Church to his program. Barth began to suspect that there is a serious *Unordnung* (a confusion) in the traditional delineation of the Church in Germany. He grew critical of the very idea of a Church coextensive with nation. He became distrustful of the very idea of a "Christian nation." He became averse to the very idea of "Christendom," and asked, with his usual passion, "Where, if you please, is it written that Christians will not be a minority, in all likelihood a small minority, in a given society?"

Having come to the conviction that the *Volkskirche* is an anomaly, and an evil, Barth began to seek for the origin of that evil. He found that the Church as *Volkskirche* dated from the latter half of the fourth century, when, with the "conversion" of Emperor Constantine, Church and Empire had coalesced. This, said Barth, was the beginning of the *Unordnung* that had lain as a shadow upon Europe for a millennium and a half, an anomaly

that has through the centuries spawned a hateful brood. It was its Constantinian heritage, so concluded Barth, that led the Church in Germany to its infamous role in the days of Hitler.¹

Thereupon Barth repudiated the Constantinian heritage, rejected it lock, stock, and barrel. He began to say that when the ancient Church accepted the courtship of the emperor she "rushed into the arms of a fiction and an illusion—in plain German, a great big lie." He began to teach that "Christendom" is a myth and "Christian civilization" a phantasy. He began to teach that the Christian Church is always, by definition as it were, a society-within-society, and never coextensive with that society in the midst of which it lies.

Now it was Barth's repudiation of Constantinianism that led him to a negative attitude toward infant baptism. This step, from the rejection of Constantinianism to the rejection of infant baptism, has surprised some of Barth's contemporaries; the logic of it has escaped many of those who observed it, and escapes them still.

But for Barth himself the step seemed logical enough; for him the rejection of the *Volkskirche* leads automatically to the rejection of infant baptism. The reason is that, as Barth reads history, it was the rise of the *Volkskirche*, the emergence of Constantinianism if you will, that gave to infant baptism a new motivation, a motivation so strong that from this moment on infant baptism became the general practice. Barth contends that the promoters of the ancient *Volkskirche* were the ardent pedobaptists that they were because they saw great potentialities in the device whereby every child born on the soil of the empire was made a lifelong member of the empire-church. This explains, says Barth, the tremendous increase in the popularity of infant baptism subsequent to the launching of Constantinianism. The protagonists of infant baptism were driven by their *Volkskirche* commitment to vehement support of infant baptism. This, for Barth, explains why infant baptism suddenly became universal practice toward the end of the fourth century.

Moreover, Barth has seen that the Reformation did not subdue Constantinianism. And he has sensed that the issue of for or against the *Volkskirche* was an important feature in the clash between the Reformers and the Anabaptists. Barth began to blame the Reformers for handing down to future generations a great evil, one on which they should have turned their weapons, the evil

1. The Nazi-dominated Church paper, *Die Junge Kirche*, proclaimed: "A fellowship of the entire Volk the Church must be, not a society by itself in a separate organization." It was because of the long tradition of Constantinianism that such things could be said without at once stirring up vehement opposition.

of the easy identification of "the people of God" with "the people."

AS we have already intimated, Barth's train of thought in this matter has met with great opposition from the side of the Reformed writers on the continent.

Among other things the opposition has assailed Barth's construction of history. Specifically has it denied that there is matter to Barth's representation of a causal connection between the launching of Constantinianism and the becoming-general of the practice of infant baptism. It has rejected especially Barth's view that the thing he calls Constantinianism was given a new lease of life by the Reformers of the sixteenth century.

It is being said—although this is indeed surprising—that Barth's construction of history in this matter is bogus; it has been seriously asserted that when he speaks of a causal connection between the rise of Constantinianism and the becoming-general of infant baptism Barth is writing fiction.² And it has been alleged by the opposition that Barth's representation of Reformation-time tensions are without basis in historic fact.

The present writer, however, is of the opinion that a study of the sources will indicate that Barth is, in the main, on good historic ground throughout. This we wish now to demonstrate a bit—far too briefly, but, as fully as present available space will allow.

The record shows that subsequent to the rise of Constantinianism there was indeed a new solicitude for the rite of baptism; not long after the launching of the *Volkskirche* steps were taken, even at law, to insure the future of the "christening" rite. The matter came to a head in connection with the Donatist rebellion.

As Prof. Frend has shown in his recent and definitive work on "The Donatist Church," Donatism was at heart a rebellion against the Constantinian innovation. The Donatists held that a baptism that was administered to a whole people was no baptism; and they challenged this pseudo-baptism of the rising *Volkskirche* by rebaptizing all who came to the Donatist communion from the empire-church. This, as the Constantinians saw at once, was extremely serious. For here were two irreconcilable ideologies confronting each other, two mutually exclusive delineations of the Church; in the Donatist vision the Church was a society of believers and of them only, whereas in the opposite camp an everybody-embracing Church was shaping up. The Donatists

2. Prof. Berkouwer, for instance, asserts that in this matter Barth is guilty of "distorting the data" (*een verwringen van het feitenmateriaal*). In another place he says that Barth's representations "have no contact with historic fact."

thought of Constantinianism as marking the end of the golden age; their opponents looked upon it as the beginning of the golden age. What the latter considered a great boon the former thought to be a great bane.

The upshot of the conflict was that laws were put on the books of the empire providing the death penalty for any and all who participated in a ceremony of re-baptism.³

Here the historical situation is pretty well as Barth has sketched it. Here we see pitted against each other a camp fervently committed to the *Volkskirche* ideology and a camp as vigorously opposed to it. And through it all and in it all runs the argument of the validity of "christening." What was the motivation behind the legislation whereby the opponents of this "christening" procedure were to be eliminated? Was it an argument of the theologians as to the accessibility of child-life to the grace of God? An argument of the exegetes as to the meaning of certain passages in the Book? Or, a nervous apprehension on the part of the Constantinians that an unusually useful support for the *Volkskirche* was being challenged? We think that it was, very apparently, the latter issue that led to the legal enactments mentioned. In a word, at this point of the investigation Barth's construction of history has much to commend it.

Donatism was suppressed and the Constantinian formula won out. But the idea that had given rise to Donatism lived on—through the ten or more centuries that lie between the fourth and the sixteenth. All through medieval times there were the "sects"; and anti-Constantinianism was commonly quite central in these "sects." The words of Harnack are profoundly true, that "In the twelve centuries . . . it never lacked for attempts to burst the bands of the . . . State Church and to restore again the apostolic congregation." In the tradition of these anti-Constantinian "sects" the days of Constantine and of Sylvester (who, according to medieval reckoning, was the "pope" when the church-empire flirtations began) were dark and dismal days, days in which the Church had fallen, with a fall as tragic and as fraught with evil consequence as had been the case with that other fall in Eden.

Now it is significant—although not at all surprising—that in the tradition of the "sects" we encounter, quite commonly, a greatly reduced conception of infant baptism. As a corollary—again not at all surprising—we also encounter instances of re-baptisms. Plainly this is evidence of a repudiation of "christening" as it prevailed in the

3. These laws may be consulted, under the caption "Ne sanctum baptisma iteretur," in *Corpus Juris, lex codicis*, Bk. I, 6:2. Especially the following passage is telling: "si quis rebaptizare quempiam . . . fuerit detectus ultimo supplicis percellatur."

empire-church. And all along the record is punctuated with executions, usually by fire, for the "sectarians" with their assault upon the *Volkskirche*-feeding institution of "christening."⁴

Once again history seems to endorse Barth's delineations. For here again is on the one hand an everybody-embracing Church that is deeply concerned to keep the "christening" rite intact, and, on the other hand, a not-everybody-embracing Church that assails that same "christening" rite.

COMING now to the Age of Reformation we find the anti-Constantinian "sects" more numerous and more significant than perhaps ever before. Of the most numerous body of the "sects" on the scene on the eve of the Reformation, i.e., of the Waldensians, we know that they practiced rebaptism for all who came to them out of the *Volkskirche*. It must be added that they also practiced infant baptism upon their own little ones (a matter which should give Barth pause); but this was an infant baptism without Constantinian overtones.

Into such a world the Reformation came, a world in which Constantinianism was in the saddle—but, surrounded by sizable deposits of anti-Constantinian tradition.

In their earliest years the Reformers gave considerable encouragement to those who had been conditioned by the pre-Reformation eruptions of anti-Constantinianism. As a result those who had been thus conditioned looked hopefully in the direction of Wittenberg and Zürich.

But it soon became apparent that Constantinianism with its *Volkskirche* was so deeply entrenched and was so formidable, with its recourse to "the other arm" (i.e., the arm of steel, wielded by the emperor's soldiery), that the Reformation had as little chance to succeed without a similar weapon as the earlier eruptions of anti-Constantinianism had had.

Then, after a struggle of soul, Luther and Zwingli accepted the hand offered them by the secular rulers. By this momentous step their own lives were made relatively secure; and by it their reformatory movement was given a chance of survival. But actually this was a return to the Constantinian formula; actually this implied the creation of a new *Volkskirche*, one on provincial rather than imperial scale. It implied also the repudiation of the "sectarian" insights to which the Reformers had given expression earlier.

4. How central the issue of baptism was in these executions may be gathered from the fact that when one "Brother Michael" was being led to the stake to be burned for heresy, in medieval Florence, the "faithful" crowd jeered: "Aha, thou that sayest that we are not baptized and that we are not really Christian. . . . I tell thee that thou art not among heathen folk." Plainly "Brother Michael" had assailed the *Volkskirche* and its "christening."

And, significantly enough in our present purpose, upon the swing to the right, upon this return to Constantinianism, followed a sudden right-about-face in regard to infant baptism. Zwingli, who in his earlier years had said "nothing saddens me as much as that I have to baptize little ones—for I know it ought not to be done," became, in a fortnight it has been said, the ardent pedobaptist that he was in his final version. His return to the everybody-embracing Church made of him a vehement protagonist of infant baptism. This history is exactly as Barth has it.

Upon the swing to the right on the part of the Reformers, upon their re-espousal of the Constantinian formula, a cry of dismay went up in the camp of those for whom anti-Constantinianism was the prime issue.

This cry of disillusionment was the birth cry of Anabaptism.⁵ The rejection of Constantinianism was the central thrust in the Anabaptist vision—not, as has been so frequently asserted, a basic dualism, or an inherent subjectivism, or an innate individualism.

It is therefore not at all strange that men have discovered in the views of Barth a certain affinity for Anabaptism. Both Barth and the Anabaptists banished the *Volkskirche* out of their system—small wonder that their thought runs parallel at times, at the point of anti-pedobaptism for instance.

Contemporaries of the rise of Anabaptism were well aware of the close parallel between Donatism with its assault upon Constantinianism on the one hand and the Anabaptism of the sixteenth century with its attack upon the neo-Constantinianism of the Reformers on the other hand. For that reason they regularly called the Anabaptists "neo-Donatists," or, simply, "Donatists." They therefore invoked and used the ancient Codes of Justinian, devised to eliminate the anti-Constantinianism of the fourth century, in their attempt to liquidate the anti-Constantinians of the sixteenth.

The anti-pedobaptism of the Anabaptists was the direct result of their rejection of the *Volkskirche*. To this the sources bear eloquent testimony. "Infant baptism is a sustaining pillar of popery, and as long as it is not eliminated no Christian congregation can come into being" said they as they declared that the medieval order could not be successfully terminated "save with the termination of infant baptism."

And the Reformers themselves also knew very

5. The Anabaptists never tired of laying to the charge of the Reformers that they had gone back on their earlier insights. They thought to see the Reformers' return to Constantinianism foretold in Scripture, i.e., in Rev. 13:11ff. The "another beast coming up out of the earth, with two horns," which "exercised all the power of the first beast," they interpreted to be the Reformers, with their reversion to Constantinianism and to the secular arm.

well what was at stake; they saw very clearly that the Anabaptist vision, if allowed to prevail, would imply the termination of the *Volkskirche*, a most unfortunate prospect now in the eyes of the Reformers. One sentence from Melanchthon tells the whole story. Said he, in an attack upon the Anabaptists: "Now let every God-fearing person contemplate what confusion would result if among us there would take shape two camps, the one consisting of baptized persons and the other of unbaptized; and if now baptism were to be discontinued for the greater part then a patently heathen mode of existence would ensue, a thing for which the devil would very much like to see the way opened."

All told there is much in the record to support Barth's construction as to the relation between Constantinianism and pedobaptism. He is right that the record reveals that the espousal of the *Volkskirche* gave men a heightened interest in infant baptism.

We are inclined to think that the main reason for refusing to go along with Barth's argument is a lingering loyalty to Constantinianism and its *Volkskirche*, a nostalgia for the Middle Ages. This suggestion opens up a vastly important and interesting subject, one that, we predict, will engage our interest increasingly in the times that lie ahead of us. But for all this there is no room here and now.⁶

FROM the vantage point of the New World we would, in conclusion, say a few things *with* Barth and a few things *to* Barth.

With Barth we would say that "christening," in the sense of baptism for everyone born in a socio-political unit, was from the start a serious

6. We cannot, however, resist the urge to jot down a few of the sentiments touching the future of the *Volkskirche*—idea that have emanated from The Netherlands of late. Here is Kromsigt (quoted without apparent disapproval by Berkouwer): "When you say that the Church consists of believers and their seed you have in principle accepted the *Volkskirche*" ("Als men zegt, tot de Kerk behooren de geloovigen en hun zaad, heeft men de volkskerk in kiem"). Then there is W. Banning who derives the idea of the *Volkskirche* "from the Biblical vision which claims every area of life for . . . the Kingship of Christ"—words common enough in the circles served by this Journal. Noordmans, who grants that there is a danger in the idea of the *Volkskirche*, as has indeed become apparent in the Nazi-times, insists nevertheless that "the masses may not, however, be excluded from 'the Church'." He proposes seriously an extension of the present ecclesiastical structurization ("een uitbouw van de gemeentelijke inrichting") so as to include also "the masses," something "over and above our presbyterian arrangement which serves the congregation that has become conscious of its Christian status" intended to serve "those who are only loosely attached to the Church." This suggestion reminds strongly of the pathetic attempt on the part of Luther to eat his cake and have it, that is, to recover the New Testament ideal of a Church of believers (and of them only) but to salvage the everybody-embracing Church the while.

and highly mistaken thing. With Barth we would say that the Church of Jesus Christ will do well in all places to get rid of this "christening" business. With Barth we would say that the *Volkskirche* is an *Unordnung*, an anomaly that continues to spawn its hateful young;⁷ and we are very happy that the First Amendment of the Federal Constitution of these United States has been devised, and stands to this day, as an effective deterrent for any creation of a *Volkskirche* on these shores.

But to Barth we would say that he has not proved as much as he, and those who assail him, seem to think he has proved. He has made a good

7. The fearful tensions that have developed in East Germany over the *Jugendweihe* may also be considered a bitter fruit of the *Volkskirche* idea; except in a Constantinian climate they would be unthinkable. It is indeed significant that the Christians there who do not have a Constantinian heritage (the Baptists, for example) are not in the same trouble about the *Jugendweihe*.

case, as we see it, for the rejection of "christening"; but that does not mean that he has made a good case for the rejection of infant baptism as such. Granted that the rise of Constantinianism served to make the practice of infant baptism general; this implies no more than that this new dimension given to infant baptism must now be repudiated by all who repudiate the *Volkskirche*. Barth himself grants, constantly, that the practice of infant baptism antedates the rise of Constantinianism; therefore to reject Constantinianism entails no more than a return to infant baptism as practiced in pre-Constantinian times.

At this point there is a serious chink in Barth's armor. One could wish that our European theologians would concentrate their attack upon him right here, where he is weak, and deal less roughly with him as to his delineation of history, where he is strong.

A Dutch Voice on Inspiration

by Leonard Sweetman, Jr.

LAST month I began a summary of the contents of four important articles on the inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of the Scriptures. These articles were written by Dr. R. Schippers, Professor of New Testament at the Free University in Amsterdam, following the declarations concerning Scripture made by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1958. Professor Schippers wrote as a Reformed scholar of the New Testament, as one who through the testimony of the Spirit recognizes and confesses that the Scriptures, which form one book, come from God; he wrote as a student of the Scriptures who listens obediently to the Scriptures. In his first two articles Professor Schippers made two significant statements regarding Scripture, and he supported these by an examination of Scripture itself. These statements are: (1) The Scriptures are infallible with reference to what God desires to declare to us in them¹; and (2) in the discussion of the diverse Biblical statements that are of an historical and scientific character, it is very important that we refrain from affixing the stamp of infallibility on these statements without further elaboration.

In the present article I wish to conclude my summary of Professor Schippers' study. Two articles remain to be considered. Both are studies in Synoptic problems.

1. This statement Prof. Schippers equates with what the Reformed Ecumenical Synod declared concerning the purpose of divine inspiration.

IN his third article, entitled "Comparisons in the Synoptic Gospels," Dr. Schippers deals with the perennial problems of dissimilar reports of the same event or saying. The dissimilarities concern location, mood, and/or phraseology. We possess four records of the one Gospel, a fact to which the traditional superscriptions of the Gospels give witness. We possess the Gospel *according to* Mark, not the *Gospel of* Mark; the Gospel *according to* Matthew, not the *Gospel of* Matthew, etc. These traditional superscriptions give witness to both the unity of the Gospel and the diversity of the Gospel accounts we possess. "It is the same joyful message which is declared in each of the four gospels by the various evangelists, each in his own way and, above all, declared in connection with the character and spiritual condition of his first readers."

Very early, however, the remarkable similarity present among Matthew, Mark and Luke was recognized. A synopsis of these gospels can be made; that is, "a survey which enables one to see at a glance where the unanimity lies as well as the divergence." The illustrations given below of the similarity and dissimilarity found in the Synoptics are used by Professor Schippers to illustrate his statement that "the Scriptures are infallible with reference to that which God wishes to reveal to us through them."² They also illustrated the point made by Abraham

2. For the convenience of American readers I have quoted the passages in full, and have used the King James version.

Kuyper in the quotation cited by Prof. Schippers at the beginning of his third article: "In the four Gospels words are attributed to Jesus on the self-same occasion which, formally, are dissimilar. Naturally, Jesus cannot have used four forms at one and the same time. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit is only aiming at the purpose of bringing a weighty impression on the Church that corresponds

uses terms familiar to his readers. In chapter 12 he places the terms "magistrates" and "powers" (or "authorities") in Jesus' mouth. These were "technical terms used in the Roman world for imperial chanceries and local chanceries."

This adaptation to local conditions, Dr. Schippers contends, is significant, and cognizance ought to be taken of it in Bible translation work. It indicates

MATTHEW 10:17-20	MARK 13:9-11	LUKE 12:11, 12	LUKE 21:12-15
<p>But beware of men:</p> <p>for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;</p> <p>and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake,</p> <p>for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.</p> <p>But when they deliver you up,</p> <p>take no thought how or what ye shall speak:</p> <p>for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.</p>	<p>But take heed to yourselves:</p> <p>for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten:</p> <p>and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake,</p> <p>for a testimony against them.</p> <p>And the gospel must first be published among all nations.</p> <p>But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up,</p> <p>take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate:</p> <p>but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.</p>	<p>And when they bring you into the synagogues, and unto magistrates,</p> <p>and powers,</p> <p>take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:</p> <p>for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.</p>	<p>But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.</p> <p>And it shall turn to you for a testimony.</p> <p>Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer:</p> <p>for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.</p>

perfectly with what proceeded from Jesus" (*Encyclopaedie der heilige Godeleerdheid*, I, 499).

These words are placed in different contexts by the evangelists. In Matthew, they are used as Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. They occur in the Lukan account of the Sermon on the Mount. They are also used in the eschatological discourses of Jesus in both Mark and Luke.

Dr. Schippers cites these words of Jesus because they show that "the three evangelists permit Jesus to speak in different words about the persecuting organs." Matthew and Mark, addressing themselves to those familiar with Jewish customs and practices, speak about synagogues and councils (a council was a small Sanhedrin, functioning as a Jewish court). Luke's readers, living outside of Palestine, are familiar with the synagogue, but not with the Jewish councils. In Luke 21, "prisons" occur as well as "synagogues." These were familiar to non-residents of Palestine. The concept "council," for which there was no comparable association in the non-Palestinian world, was not used. Luke

that "the Holy Spirit attaches more importance to good understanding (a correct impression, as Kuyper says), than to a 'literal' reproduction which would remain incomprehensible."

There are significant differences in the records of Jesus' summary of the Law. These differences can be understood, in part, in view of the different readers to whom Matthew and Mark addressed themselves. Matthew wrote to Jews. He wrote in the context of Jesus' rejection by His own people. Mark, on the other hand, wrote to Romans who were familiar with Jewish customs and practices. This accounts for Mark's use of "from all thy heart," etc., instead of the Matthean "with all thy heart," etc. This accounts, too, for Mark's adding "strength" to "heart" and "soul." (See chart at top of p. 19.)

More important, however, are the differences in the climate in which the incident took place. Matthew places the incident in a climate of hatred, rejection, and repudiation. The religious leadership rejected Jesus. They were trying to "tempt" him. Mark, writing to the Gentiles (*heidenen*), did not

MATTHEW 22:34-40

But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer

asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

MARK 12:28-31

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well,

asked him,
Which is the first commandment of all?

And Jesus answered him, The first of all commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

and thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind,
and with all thy strength:³

This is the first commandment.

And the second is like this, namely this,
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

There is none other commandment greater than these.

wish to emphasize, unrealistically, the existing cleavage between Jews and Christians. The difference in climate is reflected in the question asked. In Mark the question concerns the *first* commandment, implying that there was a second commandment also. Jesus' use of the *Shema*, Deuteronomy 6:4, as an introduction to his answer, emphasizes the unity that exists between the Jew and the Christian.

In Matthew, the question concerns the *great* commandment. If one commandment is *great*, then the others are less than great. They are of lesser importance; they are of a lower order. Jesus' answer is that the great commandment is the *first* commandment. There is a *second* commandment which is of the same order as the first. Neighbor love is not inferior to or lower than love for God.

Dr. Schippers' response to this investigation is: "Our concern is not that of the archivist, who must make a literal, accurate copy of a document. It is, on the contrary, what the Holy Spirit, according to the black and white text of the Gospels, wished the first readers to learn, and what he willed that we today, reading over their shoulders, should continue to learn. Our concern is the Truth with a capital letter."

IN his final article, Dr. Schippers investigates the Synoptic accounts of the healing of the blind men or blind man at Jericho. This is one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament for those who "place the stamp of infallibility on historical statements without further elaboration." (See chart at top of p. 20.)

Two problems emerge immediately: (1) Were two men healed, or only one? and (2) Where did the

miracle of healing take place—at the entrance to Jericho (Luke), or at the exit from the city (Matthew and Mark)? All sorts of solutions have been sought. One commentator points out that there were two Jerichos, located several miles from one another. He states that three men were healed: one was healed at the entrance of one site called Jericho, and two were healed at the exit of another site called Jericho. No solution, however, is satisfactory. Professor Greijdanus concludes: It is not obvious, it is not settled.

In spite of the fact that no solution has proved to be satisfactory, the search for a solution to this, as well as to other problems in the New Testament, continues. However, "our faith is not shaken in its trust in Jesus by this passage in the three gospels as we read them beside one another. On the contrary, our faith is strengthened. The Saviour was on the way to Jerusalem and knew how dark his future was. He had, however, not a single thought about himself and the terrible suffering which was approaching. He heard the needy cry for mercy and he helped without anyone being able to notice the sorrow in his heart" (Greijdanus).

We may not ignore difficulties in the Scriptures, such as those Professor Schippers has outlined, for the sake of guarding our religious conviction (*geloofsovertuiging*) regarding the authority, the nature, and the form of the Scriptures. Furthermore, the matter of faith in our religious conviction may not be dissociated from the results of our scientific investigation. We in the Reformed Churches tend to minimize difficulties found in

3. I have used the King James version. In Mark 12:30 the Greek of Mark has "from," not "with."

MATTHEW 20:29-31	MARK 10:46-48	LUKE 18:35-39
And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.	And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.	And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:
And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side,	And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say,	And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying,
when they heard that Jesus went by, cried out, saying,	Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.	Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.
Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.	And many charged him that he should hold his peace:	And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace:
And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace:	but he cried the more a great deal,	but he cried so much the more,
but they cried the more, saying,	Thou son of David, have mercy on me.	Thou son of David, have mercy on me.
Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.		

the Scriptures, assigning as little significance to them as possible. Others tend to emphasize these same difficulties, assigning them as much significance as possible. "In the climate of these (latter) convictions we do not feel at home. We are concerned lest we blur boundaries."

In order to be true to our own convictions, and the Christian faith itself, we must take seriously the necessity of investigating the Bible scientifically, with all the equipment at our disposal. "Relative to the Scriptures, our faith is faith in their divine inspiration. And that faith is unassailable. It rests on the witness of the Scriptures themselves . . . but that does not say the most important thing—how we now build our convictions in regard to all sorts of details about and logical conclusions from inspiration. In virtue of this we must reckon seriously with the facts."

In view of the foregoing, Professor Schippers believes that both the form and content of the propositions regarding Scripture set forth by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1958 are happy

choices. Moreover, he believes "that we shall always be able to find one another" in the formula he has given. That formula is: (1) The Scriptures are infallible with reference to what God desires to declare to us in them; and (2) In the discussion of the diverse Biblical statements that are of an historical and scientific character, it is very important that we refrain from affixing the stamp of infallibility on these statements without further elaboration. This formula indicates that which effects our faith and strengthens it: God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, our Lord. And the formula binds us there."

All of us are indebted to Professor Schippers for sharing his Biblical studies with us. We are thankful for his leadership. As a student of Professor Schippers, I have learned to love and trust him as a man of God who listens obediently and painstakingly to God's Word. May the fruit of his studies enable us, as a Church, to listen together with him in continued obedience to the Word of God.

What Is a Church Order?

by Howard B. Spaan

THE old Synod of Dort Church Order, as amended by the Christian Reformed Synod of 1914, has served its purpose well. The Synod of 1618-19 brought it into being "for the maintenance of good order among the churches." This purpose remains valid and constant throughout the ages. But precisely what is a church order? What is an ecclesiastical "Form of Government?" What are its proper contents? In proposing a major revision of its constitution, the Christian Reformed Church ought to consider this question. Perhaps old Dort, however useful, does not satisfy fully the requirements for a church order and its proper contents.

History sheds some light on this question. During the early post-Reformation days it would appear that a statement concerning the essence and nature of the church was superfluous. The climate of those days was largely theological. The subject matter of the church was household conversation. This negated the need for a definition of the church. Moreover, Roman Catholics did not have to be made aware of the Protestant conception of the church. Nor did Roman Catholics have to tell Protestants what they considered the church to be. Within this climate old Dort emerged as a list of regulations governing the Reformed division of the church in the Netherlands.

Today the common man no longer lives in a theological climate. The masses are blissfully unaware or ignorant of ecclesiology. When the masses do not know how to identify the Christ, the head of the church, they can hardly be expected to know what the church is. Today the church must clearly identify herself. She can best do this in her constitution, or church order. Although some resist the term "constitution," maintaining that it implies a legalistic set of laws, it seems honesty would require that we admit that the *Church Order* is more than regulatory. All eighty-three articles (the three articles on particular or regional synods being eliminated) are binding upon each church. In effect it is a constitution. We have an authoritative established law or custom, embodied in the document called the *Church Order* and its accompanying "Synodical Decisions."

A constitution is a statement of the fundamental principles of government. It also provides for the implementation of the principles. This implementation is nothing other than the compilation of the regulations governing the church.

IT strikes me that the purpose as stated in old Dort is inadequate for today. It is not much more than a worthy pragmatic statement: "for the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary there should be . . ." It would appear that the committee for revision sensed the inadequacy of this, for they have proposed old Article I as an introduction. They have also sought to ground the statement of purpose in Scripture: they refer to the apostolic injunction of I Corinthians 14:40: "But let all things be done decently and in order." To do more than this might be construed as exceeding the mandate given the committee, which was to revise old Dort, not to rewrite the *Church Order*. Upon further reflection I think it is unfortunate that the committee was not given a broader mandate.

However fine the committee's motive, the result is weak. As we often discover from the references to statements in the Heidelberg Catechism, proof texts many times do not prove what they are supposed to prove. Here again we have a case in point. The subject matter in the context of I Corinthians 14 is the charismatic activity which was taking place during worship services. There was much irregularity. Some spoke in tongues which defied translation and understanding. Women arose in the service to prophesy and to speak with tongues. Through these activities the purpose of worship was being defeated. The congregation was not being edified. Therefore these activities must cease, even though they might have some other and proper place within the life of the church. Worship must be edifying, expressed in terms of impressiveness, beauty, and orderliness. Obviously this rule (orderliness) which the apostle suggests in matters of worship is a good rule for all matters of church life. But the text deals with worship matters, not the offices, the assemblies, or the discipline of the church. Is there not a better grounding in Scripture for the *Church Order* than this?

The introduction to our church order or constitution should be a statement of the essence and the nature of the church itself. It should embody an adequate expression of *ekklesia*. From Scripture it ought to be shown that Christ intended His body on earth to be organized and that the church is not simply so many believers independently bound to the Lord. Something ought to be said concerning the authority of the church as related to the lives of her members. Statements of this kind

loom high in priority in this day of ecclesiological vagueness and ignorance.

THE main body of the church constitution should contain only such articles as are Biblically specified. Old Dort has many regulations which from the Scriptural point of view are optional (ecclesiastical *adiaphora*). In a given culture within a given era certain regulations may best promote good order and spiritual edification. But they may not always do so, nor does Scripture specify their inclusion. Using this criterion, we ought to eliminate a good deal from the main body of the *Church Order*. I would judge that old Dort could be reduced to about 40 or 43 articles.

How shall this be done? We must first separate articles that are Biblical principles from those that are vehicles of implementing the Biblical principles. These vehicles are regulations that the church must use to realize Biblical governmental specifications.

As one who has accepted the task of compiling the decisions of Synod and continuing the work of the late Rev. John Schaver, I find that the volume of Synodical decisions is generally of the same kind as at least half of the articles of the *Church Order*. Why then must these decisions be compiled in a separate section? Why not amend and add to the articles of the *Church Order*?

To my mind, a good church order would briefly state the Biblical specification for the offices, assemblies, task and activities, and discipline of the church. This is the main body of a church order. A supplement or appendix would follow. It would be the Christian Reformed implementation of the principles for church government. The regulations chosen would be those which best satisfy the Biblical requirement, taking into account our history and tradition, as well as our contemporary experience.

Permit me to outline three possibilities:

(1) *The Ministry.* The Biblical basis of the ministry of the Word is calling and ordination to office (principle). It is for the church to determine who are qualified for such ministry (implementation). Currently we specify that prospective ministers of our pulpits be enrolled in our ministry, or be declared candidates by the proper assembly (Synod at this moment). Those from other denominations who qualify in testimony and training and those who fulfill the provisions of Article 8 may also be considered candidates for our pulpits. These regulations are matters for supplement or appendix (the section we now label "synodical decisions" in our church order book). As important as a regulation is, it is not normative in the Scriptural sense of the term. It is our way of implementing the

Scriptural demand that the minister be called and ordained to office.

In old Dort we find most of the regulations governing the installation of ministers in the church order proper. Yet they are nothing more than our vehicle of implementation. Conversely, the constitution ought to spell out the task of the minister, even as Scripture does.

(2) *Assemblies.* It belongs to the church order to define the relationship of the local assembly (consistory) to the broader assembly. Scripture does not, however, specify how many church assembly levels there ought to be. Our tradition has given us three, although our denominational growth will eventually, I think, demand four. A constitution, Biblically based, will state that Christ's will has priority over the will of the congregation. To that end elders were ordained to execute the will of Christ.

An article ought to incorporate the teaching that the authority of the broader assemblies is not legislative, but judicial and declarative in character. How these assemblies are to be constituted (officers and their functions) is more properly a part of the vehicle of implementation. That a church should commission or delegate two men to attend Classis and that Classis can most effectively discharge her responsibility by meeting once in four months is a matter of Christian Reformed regulation.

(3) *Task and Activities of the Church.* The constitution will state what constitutes a worship service. It will specify the necessary elements in the worship service. Whatever regulations pertain to a church choir are a matter of worship *adiaphora*, and do not belong in the church order proper.

It goes without saying that the constitution based on Scripture will require worship services each Sunday. Whether the special days of amended Dort (Ascension, Old Year's, New Year's, Christmas, etc.) are mandatory is another matter. The Scotch tradition which holds that these are not commanded observances is supported by Scripture. The section on implementation could very well recommend the observance of these days on the grounds they are profitable for the spiritual development of believers and that in most instances they can be used as excellent occasions for evangelistic services. The special days really are another worship *adiaphora*.

Just what the sacraments are and for whom they exist is Scripturally stated. Consequently the constitution must embody appropriate articles on this subject. But how many times a year the Lord's supper shall be observed is a Christian Reformed matter of regulation.

WHEN we spend so much time and energy revising old Dort, we could well rethink the whole matter of *Church Order*. What is the proper content of such a document? Our present form of old Dort is no classic example of a well-ordered church order. I fear the revision, although it has very satisfactorily rearranged the articles, will be no better in the end. It cannot be, for it has not been permitted to address itself to the fundamental question raised in this piece.

LETTER TO THE JOURNAL

SIRS:

Controversial in nature and conspicuously bold in its criticism — these two characteristics describe the type of journalism which one finds in the *Reformed Journal* in recent months.

Some articles are quite revealing in that they criticize the Christian Reformed Church, and it is apparent from them that they would revolutionize many of the things she stands committed to. It seems, too, that of late a writer is just not popular unless he labors his mind and pen with profuse criticism, and some have become very proficient in it. I demur this kind of writing whereby the author monopolizes the religious press with all sorts of attacks.

Before progressing any further I would point out that it is not the purpose of this writer to belittle the efforts, or criticize the thinking, of those who advocate changes in the Chr. Ref. Church, and therefore I am not as such against all criticism. I am not of the status-quo mind. Certainly a church, as well as an individual, should progress toward spiritual maturity. But, all which is being said regarding changes, etc., by some of our leaders, I cannot embrace or subscribe to.

Writing on "The Distortion of Denominational Ideals," the Rev. S. J. DeVries lists four Ideals which, says he, the Chr. Ref. Church is becoming increasingly guilty of absolutizing. As to some of these Ideals I should say I agree, but with respect to "Obedience to the Law of God" I do question his reason for including it. How can one make the assertion that a church or an individual can become guilty of absolutizing the Law of God when that Law is already absolute, because God who gave us this law is absolute? Since when was He not absolute? That which is already absolute does not need to be made absolute a second time.

Has man actually stooped to such a low degree as to think he can know

It is not my purpose to propose change for the sake of change. Rather, I am deeply concerned that our church constitution should bear the stamp of Scripture more directly. Even though our tradition and experience have produced a generally fine heritage of governmental regulations, still these regulations are products of the believers' thinking and experience, and should not, therefore, be in the constitution proper. We utilize them as our ecclesiastical *adiaphora*. Let our constitution reflect only that which is commanded by the Lord.

tend that errors and discrepancies exist in the Bible.

Although I do believe that such exist in the various translations of the Bible, I nevertheless affirm, as do the great theologians of the past and present, that with respect to the original autographs they were without any kind of error. "It is a common mistake to attempt to solve in some rational way the mysteries of the Christian Faith." So wrote a recent writer in reference to the problem of tracing the cause of sin.


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Not only is this true with respect to the doctrine of sin, but it is equally true with regard to the doctrine of the infallibility of the Scriptures. Why are we not consistent in our thinking? Consistency, thou art a jewel! Let us leave the "mysteries" to God — that's where they belong — and exercise a true and vibrant faith. Where is the faith of these same Doctors of Theology, who take to task a fellow preacher for his probing too deeply, when at the same time they are guilty of much the same thing, that of trying to solve the apparent discrepancies in the Bible? Remember, it is a sin not to take God at His word when that very Word says unequivocally, "All scripture is of God"!

All the so-called apparent discrepancies cannot be proven by mere speculating. All the arguments which have been used as opposed to the doctrine of infallibility or inerrancy of the Scriptures seem to me to be little more than a figment of man's imagination, which shows very little respect for God and His Word. Many shallow and irresponsible theologians of our day seem to think that whatever sounds reasonable to the human mind is of greater importance. And so long as man refuses to prostrate himself before the inerrant Word of God, we shall continue to witness man disputing and rationalizing away the infallibility of the Word of God. And in our writings about the inductive and deductive methods, though no doubt these systems are pregnant with some significance, we have come to make a serious reduction upon God's inspired Word. We do play into the hands of modernism when

we allow theological speculation to form the basis of our thinking. God is not the author of sin, and therefore He cannot author or breathe error!

It must be awful in the sight of God to behold ministers of the Word reducing that very Word they vowed to defend. Oh, servant of the Lord, take that vow seriously, and remember that, whether you are just an ordinary preacher or an intellectual man of the cloth, God holds you to your vow. "Not haughty is my heart, not lofty is my pride; I do not seek to know the things God's wisdom has denied."

May the paramount purpose of the *Reformed Journal* be the publishing of

articles which are in full accord with the infallible Word of God — only then will your magazine truly reflect its name. The *Reformed Journal* is in a position to be a real channel for good to the Christian Reformed Church if it would publish material conducive to a climate that will solidify and strengthen its Christian witness.

In conclusion, I wish to say that I do enjoy an occasional article, but for the most part I do not find the *Journal*, though scholarly in some ways, very profitable. I had hoped for something less controversial and accusatory.

Sincerely yours,
JAMES BRINKERHOFF, Wyckoff, N. J.

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